



City of Walthourville

Mayor and Council Special Called Meeting

August 11, 2026 @ 5:00 PM

AGENDA

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|--|-----------------------|
| I. Call to Order | Mayor Sarah B. Hayes |
| II. Roll Call | City of Walthourville |
| III. Pay Study Report
Global Business Development Strategist. | Mrs. Delisa Clift |
| IV. Questions | Mayor and Council |
| V. Adjournment | Council |

CITY OF WALTHOURVILLE
COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS REPORT

Prepared for: Mayor and City Council

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July 24, 2026

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PROJECT PURPOSE

This report presents a comprehensive review of the City's job classifications, compensation structure, and employee benefits framework. The analysis is designed to support informed decision making, ensure internal equity, enhance market competitiveness, and promote long-term fiscal sustainability.

PROJECT SCOPE

- Job Classification Crosswalk
- Job Analysis Findings
- Compensation Benchmarking
- Benefits Analysis
- Strategic Recommendations

Compensation and Benefits Analysis

The City of Walthourville commissioned this Compensation and Benefits Analysis to evaluate the alignment, competitiveness, and sustainability of its current classification, compensation, and employee benefits practices. The study was designed to provide the Mayor and City Council with an objective assessment of the City's workforce structure and a practical framework for making informed personnel and budgetary decisions.

Municipal employees are responsible for delivering essential services that directly affect the safety, operations, infrastructure, and quality of life of the community. As the responsibilities of local government continue to grow, it is important that employee classifications, job descriptions, salary ranges, and benefits accurately reflect the work being performed and support the City's ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel.

The study included an examination of positions across the City's administrative, finance, utility, public works, fire, police, and municipal court operations. Particular attention was given to positions in which duties had expanded, overlapped with other classifications, or changed significantly since the existing job descriptions and salary practices were established.

The review found that many employees perform a broader range of duties than their current titles suggest. This is not unusual for a municipality of Walthourville's size. Smaller cities commonly operate with multifunctional employees who must support more than one municipal service area. However, where overlapping duties exist, the City must ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined, incompatible financial duties are appropriately separated, employees are properly classified, and compensation reflects the level of responsibility, authority, skill, and accountability required.

The study also identified opportunities to establish clearer career progression within public safety, strengthen administrative continuity, improve internal controls, distinguish technical and supervisory responsibilities, and create more consistent starting-pay practices for experienced applicants.

The recommendations contained in this report are intended to:

- Promote internal pay equity.
- Improve external market competitiveness.
- Align job titles with actual duties.
- Establish clear reporting relationships.
- Strengthen recruitment and retention.
- Recognize differences in responsibility and experience.
- Improve organizational accountability.
- Support responsible long-term personnel budgeting.
- Provide structured opportunities for employee advancement.

The proposed classification and compensation framework was developed with consideration for Walthourville's population, municipal service responsibilities, organizational structure, financial capacity, employee benefits, and the practices of other Georgia municipalities.

The recommendations should not be interpreted as requiring the City to immediately implement every proposed change. Instead, the report provides a structured roadmap that allows the Mayor and City Council to prioritize changes based on operational need, available funding, legal requirements, and strategic objectives.

The goal of the study is to provide the City with a fair, transparent, and sustainable compensation system that supports effective municipal services while recognizing the value and contributions of its employees.

Executive Overview

The Compensation and Benefits Analysis includes a comprehensive review of the City's current organizational structure, employee classifications, job duties, salary practices, and benefits.

The evaluation found that the City's workforce is generally structured in a manner consistent with other small Georgia municipalities. Employees frequently perform overlapping duties because Walthourville does not have the staffing size or financial resources to maintain separate departments or positions for every municipal function.

The study determined that this multifunctional staffing model remains appropriate. However, several classifications should be updated to more accurately reflect the actual duties being performed.

Major findings included:

- Administrative employees perform several responsibilities outside their existing job titles.
- The City Clerk performs statutory clerk duties in addition to human resources administration, communications, and customer service.
- The Finance Manager primarily performs accounts payable and accounts receivable functions while an external CPA firm performs several higher-level accounting responsibilities.
- The Accounts Receivable Clerk also performs business-license and customer-service duties.
- The Utility Billing Administrator performs utility-account administration and coordinates or supervises aspects of Water and Sewer operations.
- Public Works positions require clearer distinctions between administrative, supervisory, technical, and crew-level duties.
- The Fire Department appears adequately staffed and generally aligned with recognized municipal classifications.
- The Fire Chief's hourly classification and excessive working hours require further review.
- The Police Department would benefit from differentiated Police Officer I and Police Officer II classifications.
- Experienced police officers should not automatically be hired at the same rate as newly certified officers.
- The Police Department may benefit from a Police Officer II position carrying additional safety and training responsibilities.
- Several existing job descriptions require revision to accurately document current responsibilities and performance expectations.

The recommendations address these findings through revised classifications, proposed salary grades, salary ranges, career-progression opportunities, and organizational realignment.

Study Objectives

The primary objectives of the Compensation and Benefits Analysis were to:

1. Determine whether existing job titles accurately reflect the work employees perform.
2. Evaluate the level of responsibility, authority, complexity, supervision, and required qualifications associated with each position.
3. Identify duplication, overlap, gaps, and inconsistencies in assigned duties.
4. Compare City positions with classifications used by similarly sized Georgia municipalities.
5. Evaluate the competitiveness of the City's current salary practices.
6. Establish a consistent grade and salary-range structure.
7. Develop reasonable starting-pay practices that recognize relevant experience and certifications.
8. Review the City's current benefits and assess their value as part of total compensation.
9. Recommend revised job descriptions based on actual duties.
10. Provide implementation options that recognize the City's financial and operational constraints.

Methodology

The Compensation and Benefits Analysis was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The process was designed to evaluate both the actual work being performed and the external market value of that work.

The study did not rely solely on existing titles or job descriptions. Instead, each position was evaluated based on actual duties, organizational responsibility, required knowledge, supervisory authority, decision making, working conditions, and impact on City operations.

The methodology included the following components:

1. Project Initiation and Organizational Review

The study began with a review of the City's existing organizational structure and available personnel information.

Documents reviewed included, where available:

- Current organizational charts.
- Existing job descriptions.
- Employee titles.
- Current rates of pay.
- Departmental assignments.
- Reporting relationships.

- Personnel policies.
- Benefits information.
- Work schedules.
- Payroll classifications.
- Departmental procedures.
- Relevant contracts and service agreements.

This initial review established a baseline for understanding how the City was formally structured before comparing the written structure with actual operations.

2. Employee and Departmental Interviews

Employees and department representatives were interviewed to obtain direct information about their assigned duties and daily responsibilities.

The interview process examined:

- Primary job functions.
- Daily and recurring responsibilities.
- Duties performed outside the existing job description.
- Frequency and importance of assigned tasks.
- Level of independent judgment.
- Supervisory responsibilities.
- Working relationships.
- Required certifications.
- Customer and public contact.
- Financial accountability.
- Equipment and technology used.
- Operational challenges.
- Changes in duties over time.

Departmental discussions also helped identify work that was shared among employees or transferred informally because of vacancies, staffing limitations, or changes in municipal operations.

3. Job Shadowing

Direct job shadowing was a central component of the study.

Job shadowing allowed the consultant to observe employees performing their actual work rather than relying only on written descriptions or self-reported duties.

The observations considered:

- Work processes.
- Actual division of responsibilities.
- Interaction between departments.
- Workflow and approval processes.
- Customer-service demands.
- Supervisory relationships.
- Work interruptions.
- Physical and environmental demands.
- Use of equipment and information systems.
- Decision-making authority.
- Compliance responsibilities.
- Frequency of duties not reflected in the existing job description.

The job-shadow process was particularly important in identifying overlapping functions in Administration, Finance, Utility Billing, Public Works, Fire, Police, and Municipal Court operations.

4. Position Analysis

Each position was evaluated using consistent job-analysis factors.

The factors included:

Knowledge and Education

The level of formal education, specialized knowledge, training, certification, and experience reasonably required to perform the work.

Complexity

The difficulty and variety of assignments, including whether duties are routine, technical, professional, supervisory, or executive.

Independent Judgment

The extent to which the employee makes decisions without prior approval and the consequences of those decisions.

Responsibility and Accountability

The employee's responsibility for public funds, City property, confidential records, regulatory compliance, personnel, public safety, or municipal operations.

Supervisory Responsibility

The extent to which the position assigns work, directs employees, evaluates performance, recommends discipline, approves leave, or manages departmental operations.

Internal and External Contacts

The nature and importance of contact with residents, businesses, elected officials, employees, regulatory agencies, vendors, attorneys, auditors, and other governmental organizations.

Working Conditions

The physical, environmental, emergency-response, shift, safety, and availability demands associated with the position.

Organizational Impact

The degree to which the position affects the City's finances, public services, legal compliance, safety, infrastructure, governance, or public reputation.

These factors were applied consistently across departments to support internal equity.

5. Classification Review

Current titles were compared with actual duties to determine whether each employee was properly classified.

The classification review considered:

- Whether the title accurately described the position.
- Whether the employee was performing higher-level or lower-level duties.
- Whether multiple employees were performing substantially similar work under different titles.
- Whether one classification included duties normally assigned to several separate positions.
- Whether supervisory titles were supported by actual supervisory authority.
- Whether career levels should be created within a classification series.
- Whether positions should be consolidated, separated, renamed, or realigned.

This process resulted in recommendations such as:

- Establishing a Deputy City Clerk classification.
- Realigning the Finance Manager position based on the functions retained internally.
- Combining accounts receivable and business-license responsibilities.
- Clarifying the Utility Services Administrator role.
- Distinguishing Police Officer I and Police Officer II.

- Identifying a Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator assignment.
- Clarifying command responsibilities within Police and Fire operations.
- Separating Public Works administrative, supervisory, technical, and crew-level duties.

6. Internal Equity Analysis

Internal equity was evaluated by comparing positions within the City.

The analysis considered whether employees with similar levels of:

- Responsibility.
- Authority.
- Knowledge.
- Complexity.
- Supervisory accountability.
- Financial exposure.
- Public-safety responsibility.
- Required certification.

were placed within reasonably comparable grades.

The analysis also examined reporting relationships to ensure that subordinate employees were not placed at or above the pay level of supervisors without a defensible reason, such as highly specialized technical qualifications.

Internal equity does not require all positions to be paid the same. It requires pay differences to be supported by meaningful differences in the work.

7. External Market Comparison

External market information was reviewed to compare Walthourville's positions with similar jobs in other Georgia municipalities.

The comparison focused primarily on:

- Cities of similar population.
- Cities providing similar services.
- Georgia municipalities with comparable staffing structures.
- Positions reported through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs wage and salary survey.
- Publicly available municipal job postings.
- Published organizational structures.
- Salary ranges used by comparable local governments.

External comparisons were used as reference points rather than adopted automatically.

Differences were considered in:

- Population.
- Tax base.
- Geographic location.
- Number of employees.
- Service delivery.
- Public-safety structure.
- Utility operations.
- Benefits.
- Financial resources.
- Required certifications.
- Departmental scope.

The market analysis was therefore adjusted to reflect Walthourville's size and operating environment.

8. Benefits Analysis

The City's benefits were reviewed as part of total compensation.

The analysis considered:

- Health insurance.
- Retirement benefits.
- Paid leave.
- Holidays.
- Supplemental insurance.
- Employer-paid benefits.
- Employee contributions.
- Uniforms and equipment.
- Training and certification support.
- Overtime and compensatory-time practices.
- Other employment-related benefits.

Benefits were considered because salary alone does not represent the full value of employment.

A salary that appears below market may be more competitive when accompanied by strong benefits. Conversely, limited benefits may require the City to place greater emphasis on base salary.

9. Development of Salary Grades and Ranges

Positions were assigned to proposed salary grades based on their relative value to the City and external market considerations.

The salary structure included:

- A minimum.
- A recommended starting structure.
- A midpoint.
- A maximum.
- Reasonable differentials between grades.
- Career progression between related classifications.
- Promotional increase guidance.
- Lateral-entry placement standards.
- Options for certification or assignment incentives.

The range minimum represents the lowest appropriate rate for an employee who meets the basic qualifications.

The recommended starting rate represents an appropriate hiring or initial placement point for a fully qualified employee.

The midpoint represents the market or career value of a fully proficient employee who consistently performs the complete job.

The maximum is intended for highly experienced employees who demonstrate sustained performance, advanced qualifications, or significant institutional knowledge.

10. Development of Recommendations

Recommendations were developed based on the combined findings from:

- Document review.
- Interviews.
- Job shadowing.
- Classification analysis.
- Internal-equity review.
- Market comparisons.
- Benefits analysis.
- Organizational needs.
- Municipal best practices.
- Financial considerations.

The recommendations were designed to be practical for a city of Walthourville's size.

The study does not recommend creating a separate position for every municipal function. Instead, it supports a controlled multifunctional staffing model in which overlapping duties are permitted when they are compatible, clearly documented, appropriately compensated, and supported by effective internal controls.

11. Validation of Findings

Findings were reviewed for consistency across positions and departments.

The validation process considered whether:

- Titles accurately reflected duties.
- Grade relationships were logical.
- Supervisory positions were placed above subordinate classifications.
- Public-safety ranks had appropriate differentials.
- Similar work received similar treatment.
- Proposed ranges were reasonably competitive.
- Recommendations were feasible for the City.
- Position descriptions reflected actual operations.

Where duties were unclear or significantly broader than the current title, alternative classifications were presented based on the final scope assigned by the City.

Methodology Limitations

The recommendations in this report are based on the information available during the study period and the duties observed or reported at that time.

The following limitations should be recognized:

- Job duties may continue to change after the study.
- Salary data represent a point in time and will require periodic updating.
- Publicly available information from comparable municipalities may not fully describe every duty assigned to a position.
- Population alone does not determine staffing or compensation.
- Public-safety staffing must also consider calls for service, service area, crime, emergencies, shift coverage, and mutual-aid arrangements.
- Final FLSA determinations require review of actual duties and should be made in consultation with qualified legal counsel.
- Final implementation costs depend on current employee salaries and the placement method approved by Mayor and Council.
- The study does not replace the City's responsibility to evaluate individual performance.

For these reasons, the City should review the classification and compensation structure periodically and whenever a position experiences a significant change in responsibility.

Recommended Review Cycle

The City should conduct:

- An annual review of salary-range competitiveness.
- A formal compensation study at least every three to five years.
- An immediate job-description review whenever responsibilities materially change.
- A classification review before assigning permanent additional duties.
- An internal-equity review following significant hiring or promotional decisions.
- A benefits review before each major insurance or retirement renewal.

This review cycle will help prevent job descriptions, titles, and compensation practices from becoming outdated.

Closing Statement

The Compensation and Benefits Analysis provides the Mayor and City Council with a structured basis for evaluating the City's workforce and making responsible decisions about classification, pay, benefits, staffing, and organizational design.

The study confirms that Walthourville's employees routinely perform multiple functions to meet the needs of the community. This flexibility is a strength of the organization and reflects the realities of municipal service in a small city.

At the same time, flexibility must be supported by clear expectations, fair classifications, competitive compensation, effective supervision, and appropriate internal controls.

The recommendations contained in this report are intended to preserve the City's ability to operate efficiently while strengthening accountability, employee development, recruitment, retention, and long-term organizational stability.

Implementation should be phased according to priority, financial capacity, and operational need. Through deliberate implementation and periodic review, the City can establish a compensation and classification system that is fair to employees, responsible to taxpayers, and aligned with the City's future direction

Administrative Position Overlap and Comparable City Analysis

Executive Finding

The job shadowing process identified substantial overlap among the City of Walthourville's administrative positions. Based on Walthourville's estimated population of approximately 3,945 residents, some degree of functional overlap is consistent with the staffing practices of other small Georgia municipalities. Small cities frequently consolidate clerical, licensing, utility billing, customer service, records administration, and basic human resources functions because they do not have sufficient workload or financial capacity to maintain a separate department for every municipal function.

However, the analysis also found that not all overlap presents the same level of organizational risk. The overlapping duties assigned to the City Clerk, Accounts Receivable Clerk, and Utility Billing Administrator generally reflect practices found in comparable municipalities. The current Finance Manager arrangement is less typical because the position appears to perform primarily accounts payable and accounts receivable transaction processing while an external CPA firm performs higher-level accounting functions.

The overlap is therefore generally consistent with small city practice, but the City's current job titles, reporting relationships, internal controls, and written job descriptions do not fully reflect the actual work being performed.

Walthourville's Administrative Structure Identified Through Job Shadowing

The job-shadowing process identified the following functional assignments:

Current position	Additional functions being performed
City Clerk	Human resources administration, media and communications, customer service, records administration, and general municipal administration
Finance Manager	Accounts payable and accounts receivable processing, with most advanced accounting and financial reporting performed by an external CPA firm
Accounts Receivable Clerk	Business licensing, customer service, payment processing, and revenue collection
Utility Billing Administrator	Utility billing administration and supervision or coordination of Water and Sewer operations

These assignments demonstrate that Walthourville operates through a multifunctional administrative staffing model, rather than a traditional departmental model with separate HR, communications, finance, licensing, customer service, and utility administration units.

Georgia Municipal Practice

The Georgia Municipal Association recognizes that the City Clerk's responsibilities vary considerably based on the size and organizational structure of a city. In smaller municipalities, city clerks may perform human resources, licenses and permits, planning and zoning, municipal court, utility account administration, payment collection, and other administrative responsibilities in addition to maintaining the official records of the municipality.

This supports the conclusion that combining administrative functions is not inherently inappropriate. The key issue is whether the duties are logically grouped, adequately documented, properly compensated, and supported by effective internal controls.

Comparable Georgia Municipalities

The following cities were selected because their populations are reasonably comparable to Walthourville or because their published organizational practices provide useful small city benchmarks.

City of Alma

The City of Alma has an official population of approximately 3,433 and an estimated population of approximately 3,362, placing it very close to Walthourville in size.

Alma maintains a City Manager and City Clerk within its administration structure. The City Clerk's office is also the public contact for general and professional business licensing.

Comparable features:

- The City Clerk is involved in both statutory records administration and business licensing.
- Residents and businesses interact with one central administrative office for multiple municipal services.
- Administrative functions are consolidated rather than assigned to separate licensing and records departments.

Comparison to Walthourville:

Walthourville's assignment of business licensing to the Accounts Receivable Clerk differs from Alma's placement of that function in the Clerk's office, but both approaches are common in small municipalities. Business licensing has both a regulatory component and a revenue-collection component, so it can reasonably be placed under either the City Clerk or Finance function.

Walthourville's City Clerk role is broader than the publicly documented Alma model because it also includes HR, media, and customer service.

City of Glennville

Glennville has an official population of approximately 3,834, almost identical to Walthourville's official population, although its current estimate is higher at approximately 5,104.

Glennville maintains a City Clerk responsible for coordinating the City's administrative functions and supporting the City Manager, Mayor, and Council. The city also has a separately identified HR Director, demonstrating that Glennville has reached a staffing level at which certain functions have been separated from the City Clerk.

Glennville's public-facing systems combine access to utility payments and business license payments through City Hall, while the city maintains an identifiable Water and Sewer Department.

Comparable features:

- Centralized City Hall customer service for utility and business-license transactions.
- A broad City Clerk administrative role.
- Water and sewer services connected administratively to City Hall.

Differences from Walthourville:

- Glennville has separated HR from the City Clerk.
- Glennville publicly identifies Water and Sewer as a department rather than assigning supervision primarily through a utility billing position.
- Glennville's structure suggests a more developed separation between administrative billing functions and field utility operations.

Implication for Walthourville:

Glennville provides one of the strongest comparisons. It supports Walthourville's consolidation of customer transactions and administrative functions, but it also suggests that HR administration and utility operational supervision should be separately identified as the organization grows.

City of Metter

Metter places business-license administration with the City Clerk. Applications are filed with and returned to the City Clerk's office.

Comparable features:

- Business licensing is performed as an additional responsibility within an existing administrative position.

- The city does not appear to maintain a stand-alone business-license department.
- Regulatory records and licensing functions are consolidated.

Comparison to Walthourville:

Walthourville assigns business licensing to the Accounts Receivable Clerk rather than the City Clerk. That arrangement is operationally reasonable because occupation taxes and license fees generate municipal revenue. However, the position should be formally classified as an Accounts Receivable and Business License Clerk or Revenue and Licensing Clerk, so the title reflects the actual responsibilities.

City of Folkston

Folkston has an estimated population of approximately 4,701, making it somewhat larger than Walthourville but still within a useful small-city comparison range.

Folkston identifies a City Clerk and separately identifies Utility Services for water and wastewater. Business licenses are processed at City Hall, while utility services are administered through an identifiable utility function.

Comparable features:

- Business licensing and customer transactions are processed through City Hall.
- A relatively small administrative staff supports multiple service areas.

Differences from Walthourville:

- Utility billing and utility operations appear more clearly separated.
- The City Clerk remains identifiable as the municipal records and governance officer.
- Water and wastewater operations are recognized as a distinct service function.

Implication for Walthourville:

The Folkston structure suggests that Walthourville may combine utility billing administration and customer service, but operational Water and Sewer supervision should be clearly defined as a separate component of the position or assigned to a qualified Public Works or Utility Supervisor.

City of Grantville

Grantville has an estimated population of approximately 3,281, which is slightly smaller than Walthourville.

Grantville maintains both a City Clerk and Assistant City Clerk. The City Clerk is identified as the City's official recordkeeper. The Clerk's office also serves as a central point for municipal transactions, including business licenses, utilities, and other payments.

Comparable features:

- Centralized customer service through the Clerk's office.
- Multiple types of payments and applications handled through one administrative location.
- Cross-training between the City Clerk and Assistant City Clerk.

Differences from Walthourville:

- Grantville has created a Deputy or Assistant Clerk structure to support continuity and distribute administrative workload.
- The statutory City Clerk function is more clearly distinguished from transactional finance duties.

Implication for Walthourville:

Grantville supports the establishment of the proposed Deputy City Clerk position. This would allow Walthourville to distribute records, meetings, open records, licensing, communications, and customer service responsibilities while preserving appropriate backup for the City Clerk.

City of Summerville

Summerville has an estimated population of approximately 4,421, placing it reasonably close to Walthourville.

Summerville's City Clerk handles official records, elections, business licenses, and alcohol licenses. However, the city separately identifies Customer Service, Human Resources, Finance, Purchasing, and other administrative functions within City Hall.

Comparable features:

- Business licensing is combined with City Clerk functions.
- City Hall houses multiple administrative and customer facing services.
- Residents access utility and business license services through centralized municipal systems.

Differences from Walthourville:

- Human resources is separated from the City Clerk.
- Finance and customer service are separately identified.
- The administrative structure has clearer functional specialization.

Implication for Walthourville:

Summerville represents a more mature small city administrative model. Walthourville may not need the same number of separately titled positions, but the comparison supports formally distinguishing Clerk, HR, Finance, Customer Service, and Utility responsibilities, even when employees continue to perform more than one function.

City of Twin City

Twin City provides an example of a smaller Georgia municipality using significant role consolidation. The City Clerk oversees the City's day-to-day finance operations, including accounts payable, accounting, and payroll.

Comparable features:

- A single administrative position performs statutory clerk and financial functions.
- Finance responsibilities are consolidated because of limited municipal staffing.
- The structure relies heavily on one position with broad institutional knowledge.

Comparison to Walthourville:

Walthourville has already moved beyond the Twin City model by employing a City Clerk, Finance Manager, Accounts Receivable Clerk, and Utility Billing Administrator. Therefore, while functional overlap remains appropriate, the City should have stronger separation and more clearly differentiated duties than a municipality operating with only one or two central administrative employees.

Richmond Hill as a Functional Example

Richmond Hill is substantially larger than Walthourville and is not a true population peer. However, its published City Clerk duties provide a useful example of how multiple administrative responsibilities may be consolidated. Richmond Hill's City Clerk manages administrative operations, business licenses, utility billing, media relations, official records, and some finance and budget responsibilities.

This example confirms that combining clerk, licensing, media, utility administration, and general administrative duties is not unusual in Georgia municipal government. However, a larger city is more likely to have additional personnel supporting those functions.

Position-by-Position Assessment

City Clerk: HR Administration, Media, and Customer Service

Alignment with comparable cities: High

The combination of City Clerk, HR administration, media, and customer service is consistent with the multifunctional role of clerks in small Georgia cities. GMA specifically recognizes that clerks in smaller municipalities may serve as HR coordinators, licensing officials, utility administrators, and general administrative contacts.

The media and communications function is also reasonably aligned with the City Clerk because the Clerk has access to official actions, meeting information, public notices, ordinances, and records.

However, there are limitations. Human resources involves confidential personnel information, employee relations, investigations, benefits administration, FMLA, ADA, hiring, disciplinary actions, and wage-and-hour compliance. As those responsibilities increase, they should not remain an informal add-on.

Recommended classification:

- City Clerk and Administrative Services Director; or
- City Clerk, with a separate HR Coordinator or HR Administrator; and
- Deputy City Clerk responsible for records, communications, licensing, and front-office continuity.

The City Clerk should not be expected to continuously manage statutory clerk duties, full HR administration, media, and routine customer-service transactions without administrative support.

Finance Manager: Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable

Alignment with comparable cities: Partial

It is common for small-city finance employees to perform accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, deposits, reconciliations, budgeting support, and financial reporting. It is also common for small municipalities to use an external CPA for year-end financial statements, audits, technical accounting support, and complex financial reporting.

The concern is not the use of an external CPA. The concern is whether the title **Finance Manager** accurately describes the internal position.

A true Finance Manager would generally be expected to perform or oversee:

- Budget development and monitoring.
- General ledger management.
- Bank and account reconciliations.
- Financial reporting to the Mayor and Council.
- Cash management.
- Debt and capital financial planning.
- Internal controls.
- Grant financial compliance.
- Accounts payable and receivable supervision.
- Coordination with auditors and the external CPA.

When most higher-level finance responsibilities are performed by an external CPA and the internal position primarily processes AP and AR, the current title may overstate the level and scope of responsibility.

Recommended classification options:

- Senior Accounting Specialist.
- Finance and Accounting Coordinator.
- Accounts Payable and Receivable Coordinator.
- Finance Administrator, if the employee also manages budget monitoring, reconciliations, and CPA coordination.

The final classification should depend on whether the employee merely processes transactions or exercises independent responsibility for the City's internal financial administration.

Accounts Receivable Clerk: Business Licensing and Customer Service

Alignment with comparable cities: High

This combination is common and operationally logical. Business licensing involves:

- Receiving applications.
- Verifying required documentation.
- Calculating and collecting occupation taxes and fees.
- Issuing licenses.
- Maintaining business records.
- Processing renewals.
- Assisting applicants.
- Reconciling revenues.

These duties overlap naturally with accounts receivable, cashiering, and customer service. Alma, Metter, Folkston, Grantville, and Summerville all demonstrate that licensing is commonly performed through a centralized City Hall, Clerk, or administrative-finance function.

Recommended classification:

- Accounts Receivable and Business License Clerk.
- Revenue and Licensing Clerk.
- Customer Accounts and Licensing Specialist.

The position should have clearly documented responsibilities for cash handling, license approvals, revenue coding, reconciliations, and customer service.

Utility Billing Administrator: Water and Sewer Supervision**Alignment with comparable cities: Moderate**

It is common for utility billing staff to oversee:

- Customer accounts.
- Meter readings and billing files.
- Service connections and disconnections.
- Delinquency notices.
- Payment arrangements.
- Customer complaints.
- Coordination with field crews.
- Billing corrections.
- Reporting of consumption and account activity.

It is less common for a utility billing employee to directly supervise the technical operation of the water and sewer system unless the position has the necessary operational experience, authority, and certifications.

Comparable cities generally connect utility billing closely with City Hall administration while separately recognizing Water and Sewer as an operational service. Glennville and Folkston provide examples of this distinction.

The appropriate classification depends on what “Water/Sewer supervision” means in practice.

If the position coordinates work orders, schedules service calls, communicates with field staff, and monitors customer-account issues, the overlap is reasonable.

If the position supervises system maintenance, environmental compliance, emergency repairs, treatment operations, sampling, technical personnel, or regulatory reporting, the role is broader than Utility Billing Administrator and should be reclassified.

Recommended classification options:

- Utility Billing and Customer Service Supervisor, when the focus is billing and customer accounts.
- Utility Services Administrator, when the position coordinates billing and field operations.
- Water and Sewer Operations Manager, when the position has genuine technical and supervisory authority.
- Public Works or Utility Superintendent, if the role includes systemwide operational responsibility.

Internal Control Considerations

Functional overlap is common in small municipalities, but it should not result in one employee controlling an entire financial transaction from beginning to end.

The City should avoid arrangements in which the same employee:

- Establishes a customer or vendor account.
- Creates or approves a charge.
- Receives the payment or prepares the payment.
- Posts the transaction.
- Performs the reconciliation.
- Approves an adjustment or write-off.
- Reviews the final financial report.

Where staffing does not permit complete separation, compensating controls should include:

- Supervisory approval.
- Independent bank reconciliations.
- Daily cash and deposit verification.
- Dual authorization for payments.
- Independent review of billing adjustments.
- Monthly review of accounts receivable aging.
- Council or management review of financial reports.
- Periodic review by the external CPA.
- Mandatory leave and cross-training.
- Documented procedures for cash handling, licensing, billing, and purchasing.

The external CPA should not be treated as a substitute for effective internal management controls. The City must retain responsibility for transaction approval, accurate records, policy enforcement, and oversight.

Comparative Scoring

The following score evaluates how closely Walthourville's current overlaps align with observable small city Georgia practices.

Position and overlap	Alignment score	Assessment
City Clerk plus HR administration	8/10	Common in small cities, but workload and confidentiality risks support eventual separation or dedicated HR assistance
City Clerk plus media and communications	9/10	Strong alignment because public notices and official information naturally connect to the Clerk's office
City Clerk plus customer service	7/10	Common, but routine front-counter work can interfere with statutory and governance responsibilities
Finance Manager performing AP and AR	5/10	Transactional overlap is common, but the title and management level may not match the actual duties
AR Clerk plus business licenses	9/10	Strong functional alignment between revenue administration, licensing, cashiering, and records
AR Clerk plus customer service	9/10	Very common in small municipal finance and utility offices
Utility Billing Administrator plus customer service	10/10	Directly aligned with standard municipal utility-billing practice
Utility Billing Administrator plus field coordination	8/10	Reasonable when limited to service coordination and work-order communication
Utility Billing Administrator plus technical Water/Sewer supervision	5/10	Requires clearer authority, technical qualifications, and possible reclassification
Overall administrative overlap	7.5/10	Generally consistent with a municipality of Walthourville's size, but formal restructuring and stronger controls are needed

Overall Conclusion

The overlap identified during the City of Walthourville job-shadowing process is broadly consistent with the staffing models used by other small Georgia municipalities. Cities with populations between approximately 3,000 and 5,000 frequently depend on multifunctional employees and centralized City Hall operations. Clerk, licensing, customer service, utility billing, payment collection, and basic HR duties are often combined.

The issue is therefore not that overlap exists. The primary concerns are:

1. Whether the current titles accurately reflect the work.
2. Whether employees are compensated for the level and breadth of their responsibilities.
3. Whether one position has accumulated more work than can reasonably be performed.
4. Whether financial and operational controls remain adequate.
5. Whether staff possess the qualifications required for specialized responsibilities.
6. Whether the structure provides sufficient backup and continuity.

The job-shadow findings support retaining a multifunctional staffing model while revising the City's classifications and internal structure.

Recommended Administrative Structure

City Clerk

Primary responsibilities should include:

- Official records.
- Mayor and Council support.
- Agendas and minutes.
- Ordinances and resolutions.
- Open records.
- Elections.
- Administrative policy coordination.
- Oversight of official communications.

The City Clerk may retain high level HR administration temporarily, but routine HR processing should gradually be assigned to an HR Coordinator, Deputy City Clerk, or qualified external provider.

Deputy City Clerk

Recommended responsibilities include:

- Records management support.
- Agenda and minute preparation.
- Public notices.
- Website and media updates.
- Business-license backup.
- Customer-service escalation.
- Clerk-office continuity.
- Assistance with routine personnel administration.

Finance and Accounting Coordinator

This position should replace or clarify the existing Finance Manager classification unless the incumbent performs full management level finance responsibilities.

Recommended responsibilities include:

- Accounts payable.
- Accounts receivable oversight.
- Payroll coordination.
- General ledger support.
- Reconciliations.
- Budget monitoring.
- Financial report preparation.
- External CPA and auditor coordination.
- Internal control administration.

Revenue and Business License Clerk

Recommended responsibilities include:

- Accounts receivable.
- Business licenses.
- Occupation taxes.
- Cash receipts.
- Customer accounts.
- Revenue records.
- Front-counter customer service.
- Daily payment reconciliation.

Utility Services Administrator

Recommended responsibilities include:

- Utility billing.
- Customer accounts.
- Meter-data coordination.
- Service orders.
- Delinquency administration.
- Billing adjustments.
- Customer service.
- Coordination with Water and Sewer field employees.

Technical supervision of water and sewer operations should be assigned to a properly qualified Utility Supervisor, Public Works Supervisor, Water and Sewer Superintendent, or certified operator.

Final Recommendation

Walthourville should not attempt to eliminate all overlapping responsibilities. Doing so would likely create unnecessary positions and increase personnel costs beyond what is reasonable for a city of its size.

Instead, the City should implement a controlled multifunctional model that:

- Preserves reasonable cross-functional duties.
- Revises titles to reflect actual responsibilities.
- Separates incompatible financial duties.
- Establishes a Deputy City Clerk position.
- Distinguishes utility billing from technical utility operations.
- Clarifies the role of the external CPA.
- Documents reporting relationships.
- Establishes cross training and backup coverage.
- Adjusts compensation to recognize expanded scope and accountability.

This approach would remain fiscally appropriate for Walthourville while improving accountability, service delivery, employee role clarity, and organizational sustainability.

Recommended Grades and Salary Ranges

Administrative Staff Realignment

Based on the job shadow findings, the proposed redistribution of duties, internal equity relationships, and available Georgia municipal benchmarks, I recommend placing the realigned administrative positions within the following structure.

Georgia's Department of Community Affairs wage survey is an appropriate benchmark because it collects minimum and maximum pay information for more than 160 local government classifications.

Recommended Classification Table

Proposed position	Proposed grade	Proposed annual range	Approximate hourly range	Recommended hiring zone
City Clerk and Administrative Services Director	Grade 7	\$52,000–\$72,000	\$25.00–\$34.62	\$54,000–\$61,000
Deputy City Clerk	Grade 5	\$42,000–\$57,000	\$20.19–\$27.40	\$43,500–\$48,500
Finance and Accounting Coordinator	Grade 6	\$47,000–\$65,000	\$22.60–\$31.25	\$49,000–\$56,000
Revenue and Business License Clerk	Grade 4	\$36,000–\$49,000	\$17.31–\$23.56	\$37,500–\$42,000
Utility Services Administrator	Grade 6	\$48,000–\$66,000	\$23.08–\$31.73	\$50,000–\$57,000
HR Coordinator/Personnel Administrator, if separated	Grade 5	\$42,000–\$58,000	\$20.19–\$27.88	\$44,000–\$50,000

The hourly equivalents assume a standard **2,080-hour work year**. The hiring zone is not a separate pay range; it is the recommended area within the range for hiring or placing a fully qualified employee who is new to the classification.

1. City Clerk and Administrative Services Director

Proposed grade: Grade 7

Proposed salary range: \$52,000–\$72,000

This grade assumes that the position will continue to perform more than the statutory City Clerk function and will retain responsibility for some combination of:

- Mayor and Council support
- Agendas, minutes, ordinances, and resolutions
- Open records and records management
- Elections coordination
- Administrative policy management
- Official communications and media
- Departmental administrative coordination
- Oversight of the Deputy City Clerk
- High-level personnel administration
- Customer-service escalation

GMA describes the City Clerk as responsible for council-meeting administration, ordinances, resolutions, official records, and legally required publication. In smaller municipalities, the position often carries broader administrative responsibilities. (GACities)

A current Georgia example illustrates the effect of scope on compensation: Warm Springs advertised a combined City Clerk position with financial responsibilities at approximately \$45,000–\$47,000, while Oxford advertised a City Clerk/Finance Officer position at \$65,000–\$85,000. Those examples establish a broad market corridor, with Walthourville appropriately falling between the two based on its proposed scope. (Indeed)

Classification rationale

The position should be placed above the Deputy City Clerk, Finance and Accounting Coordinator, and other administrative-support positions because it carries:

- Statutory responsibility
- Direct support to elected officials
- Custody of official records
- Organization-wide administrative responsibility
- Greater confidentiality and legal exposure
- Supervisory or coordinating authority

Recommended placement

- **Developing or newly promoted incumbent:** \$52,000–\$56,000
- **Fully qualified incumbent:** \$57,000–\$63,000
- **Highly experienced or expanded-scope incumbent:** \$64,000–\$72,000

If HR is fully removed from this position and assigned to a dedicated HR Coordinator, the City Clerk title could remain in **Grade 6 or lower Grade 7**, with a range closer to **\$48,000–\$67,000**.

2. Deputy City Clerk

Proposed grade: Grade 5

Proposed salary range: \$42,000–\$57,000

The Deputy City Clerk should provide substantive professional support rather than function solely as a receptionist or general clerical assistant. Recommended duties include:

- Preparing draft agendas and minutes
- Maintaining ordinances, resolutions, and contracts
- Coordinating public notices
- Processing open-records requests
- Assisting with elections
- Maintaining the City website and official communications
- Providing business-license backup
- Cross-training in Clerk functions
- Acting as City Clerk during designated absences

A recent Georgia posting for Deputy City Clerk in Hogansville advertised a starting salary of approximately **\$49,920**, along with health, retirement, dental, vision, and other benefits. This supports a midpoint near \$49,500 for Walthourville’s proposed classification. (Indeed)

Classification rationale

The Deputy City Clerk should be:

- One grade below the Finance and Accounting Coordinator and Utility Services Administrator where those positions have substantial independent program responsibility
- Two grades below the City Clerk and Administrative Services Director
- Above routine clerical and cashiering classifications

Recommended placement

- **Entry/developmental:** \$42,000–\$45,000

- **Fully qualified:** \$46,000–\$51,000
- **Experienced, certified, or functioning regularly as Clerk:** \$52,000–\$57,000

A Deputy City Clerk who performs only clerical support, without acting authority or statutory-records responsibilities, would be more appropriately placed in **Grade 4 at approximately \$36,000–\$49,000.**

3. Finance and Accounting Coordinator

Proposed grade: Grade 6

Proposed salary range: \$47,000–\$65,000

This proposed classification recognizes that the current position does not appear to function as a traditional Finance Director because an external CPA firm performs many advanced accounting functions. The DCA classification for Finance Director contemplates overall administration of the finance department and coordination of all municipal financial activities.

The realigned internal position should nevertheless be more than an AP/AR clerk. Recommended responsibilities include:

- Accounts payable oversight
- Accounts receivable oversight
- Payroll coordination
- General-ledger transaction review
- Bank and account reconciliations
- Budget tracking
- Monthly financial-report preparation
- Purchasing and internal-control support
- Coordination with the external CPA and auditor
- Grant expenditure tracking
- Preparation of financial information for management and Council

Classification rationale

Grade 6 recognizes that the position:

- Handles confidential financial information
- Coordinates multiple financial processes
- Exercises independent judgment
- Serves as the City's primary internal contact with the CPA and auditor
- Has greater accountability than a transactional accounting clerk

It is below a true Finance Director classification because the external CPA retains substantial responsibility for technical accounting, year-end reporting, and possibly budget or audit preparation.

Recommended placement

- **Primarily AP/AR and payroll coordination:** \$47,000–\$51,000
- **Full accounting coordination and reconciliations:** \$52,000–\$58,000
- **Budget monitoring, financial reporting, grants, and internal-control leadership:** \$59,000–\$65,000

If the City eventually transfers full budgeting, general-ledger management, financial reporting, cash management, and departmental supervision back in-house, the role should be reclassified as **Finance Director, Grade 7 or 8**, with a materially higher salary range.

4. Revenue and Business License Clerk

Proposed grade: Grade 4

Proposed salary range: \$36,000–\$49,000

This title better reflects the actual combination of:

- Accounts receivable
- Business-license administration
- Occupation-tax collection
- Cash receipts
- Customer service
- Payment posting
- License renewals
- Revenue records
- Daily balancing and deposit preparation

Combining licensing, revenue processing, and customer service is reasonable in a small municipality because the functions involve receiving applications, collecting fees, maintaining account records, and assisting the public.

Classification rationale

Grade 4 reflects specialized clerical and financial responsibilities requiring greater accountability than a general receptionist or office assistant. However, the position should remain below

professional coordinators and administrators because it does not ordinarily exercise department-level authority.

Recommended placement

- **Basic cashiering and AR support:** \$36,000–\$39,000
- **Fully independent AR and licensing administration:** \$40,000–\$44,000
- **Experienced employee with complex licensing and reconciliation duties:** \$45,000–\$49,000

The upper portion should be reserved for an employee who independently administers the licensing process, performs reconciliations, resolves complex account issues, and provides cross-functional backup.

5. Utility Services Administrator

Proposed grade: Grade 6

Proposed salary range: \$48,000–\$66,000

This classification is appropriate when the position performs both utility-account administration and meaningful coordination or supervision of Water and Sewer services.

Recommended duties include:

- Utility billing administration
- Meter-reading coordination
- Service orders
- Connections and disconnections
- Delinquent-account administration
- Billing adjustments
- Customer complaints
- Coordination of field-service requests
- Supervision or direction of utility customer-service staff
- Coordination with certified operators and contractors
- Preparation of operational and consumption reports
- Support for utility-rate and revenue analysis

Classification rationale

Grade 6 is appropriate because the position manages a major municipal revenue operation and connects administrative billing functions with essential public infrastructure services.

The position should be distinguished from a technical Water and Sewer Superintendent. It should not be assigned responsibility for treatment operations, regulatory certification, technical system compliance, or engineering decisions unless the employee possesses the required knowledge and credentials.

Recommended placement

- **Billing and customer-service administration only:** \$48,000–\$52,000
- **Billing plus work-order and field coordination:** \$53,000–\$59,000
- **Substantial staff supervision and utility-program administration:** \$60,000–\$66,000

If the employee directly supervises certified operators, system repairs, compliance sampling, regulatory reporting, emergency response, and infrastructure maintenance, the title should be **Water and Sewer Operations Manager** or **Utility Superintendent**, likely in **Grade 7** at approximately \$55,000–\$75,000.

6. HR Coordinator/Personnel Administrator

Proposed grade: Grade 5

Proposed salary range: \$42,000–\$58,000

This position becomes necessary if the City decides to remove routine HR administration from the City Clerk. Recommended responsibilities include:

- Recruitment and onboarding
- Personnel files
- Benefits enrollment
- Leave administration
- Training records
- Performance-management coordination
- Workers' compensation administration
- Policy implementation
- Employee relations support
- Coordination with employment counsel and benefit providers
- Compliance tracking

Classification rationale

Grade 5 recognizes professional and confidential personnel work but assumes the position is a coordinator or administrator rather than a department director.

A Personnel Director would require broader authority over employee relations, investigations, compensation administration, policy development, legal compliance, workforce planning, and staff supervision. That position would more appropriately fall in **Grade 7**, with a range of approximately **\$50,000–\$74,000**

Proposed Grade Relationships

The recommended administrative hierarchy would be:

Grade **Administrative classification**
Grade 7 City Clerk and Administrative Services Director
Grade 6 Finance and Accounting Coordinator
Grade 6 Utility Services Administrator
Grade 5 Deputy City Clerk
Grade 5 HR Coordinator/Personnel Administrator
Grade 4 Revenue and Business License Clerk

This structure creates visible progression without artificially elevating transactional positions to management classifications.

Recommended Final Ranges for the Compensation Plan

Recommend adopting the following ranges:

Grade	Proposed annual minimum	Proposed midpoint	Proposed annual maximum	Range spread
Grade 4	\$36,000	\$42,500	\$49,000	36.1%
Grade 5	\$42,000	\$49,500	\$57,000	35.7%
Grade 6	\$47,000	\$56,000	\$65,000	38.3%
Grade 7	\$52,000	\$62,000	\$72,000	38.5%

For the Utility Services Administrator, I recommend allowing a technical or operational premium of up to \$1,000 above the standard Grade 6 maximum when the employee carries

significant utility supervisory duties. Alternatively, the City can keep the standard Grade 6 maximum of \$65,000 and use certification pay or a responsibility stipend.

Preferred approach

It would be cleaner to maintain one range for every position assigned to the same grade:

- Grade 4: **\$36,000–\$49,000**
- Grade 5: **\$42,000–\$57,000**
- Grade 6: **\$47,000–\$65,000**
- Grade 7: **\$52,000–\$72,000**

Any difference in specialized duties should be addressed through:

- Placement within the range
- Certification incentives
- Temporary acting pay
- Responsibility stipends
- Reclassification when the duties materially change

Implementation Guidance

Employees should not automatically be placed at the midpoint merely because a new plan is adopted. Placement should consider:

1. Relevant experience in the assigned function
2. Length of municipal service
3. Required certifications
4. Current salary
5. Performance history
6. Degree of independent authority
7. Supervisory responsibilities
8. Internal relationships with comparable positions

At minimum, no employee should remain below the adopted range minimum after implementation. However, moving every incumbent directly to midpoint could create unnecessary fiscal impact and undermine the purpose of having a salary range.

Recommended placement method

- **Minimum to 85% of midpoint:** employee is developing in the role
- **85% to 100% of midpoint:** employee is fully qualified and consistently performing the complete role
- **100% to 115% of midpoint:** employee is highly experienced, has advanced credentials, or carries sustained additional responsibilities
- **Above 115% of midpoint:** reserved for exceptional tenure, performance, or hard-to-recruit qualifications

Overall Recommendation

The proposed salary structure is appropriately conservative for Walthourville while recognizing the broader duties identified through job shadowing. It avoids creating unnecessary director level positions but corrects classifications that no longer match the work being performed.

The most important realignment decisions are:

- Place the broadened **City Clerk and Administrative Services Director** in Grade 7.
- Reclassify the current Finance Manager as **Finance and Accounting Coordinator**, Grade 6, unless the City restores full finance-management authority to the position.
- Establish the **Deputy City Clerk** in Grade 5.
- Reclassify the Accounts Receivable Clerk as **Revenue and Business License Clerk**, Grade 4.
- Reclassify the Utility Billing Administrator as **Utility Services Administrator**, Grade 6, with a clear separation between administrative coordination and technical system responsibility.
- Establish an **HR Coordinator**, Grade 5, when the City is financially and operationally ready to separate HR from the City Clerk.

These ranges should be reviewed against the actual salaries of current incumbents before Mayor and Council adopts the final implementation cost.

Fire and Police Department Classification and Staffing Analysis

Executive Finding

The City of Walthourville's Fire and Police Departments are generally organized in a manner consistent with other small Georgia municipalities that provide their own public-safety services. Walthourville's estimated population is approximately 3,945, placing it within the same broad population group as Metter, Grantville, Glennville, and other cities with roughly 3,000 to 5,000 residents.

The principal findings are:

- The Fire Department's basic classification structure appears appropriate.
- Paying the Fire Chief hourly is not automatically inconsistent with Georgia municipal practice, but the number of hours worked, and the Chief's executive responsibilities create significant compensation, overtime, workload, and succession concerns.
- A police structure consisting of a Chief, Major, Corporal, and Police Officers is more command-heavy than some similarly sized departments, but it may be defensible if the Major has substantial operational, administrative, investigative, accreditation, training, or acting-chief responsibilities.
- Adding another general command position would not be the highest priority.
- Adding a sworn officer with clearly assigned safety, training, compliance, and patrol responsibilities could be justified if workload data support the need.
- Paying all officers the same starting rate, regardless of certification and directly relevant experience, is not a strong market practice and may impair recruitment and retention.

Overall, the public-safety structure aligns with small-city practice at approximately 7.5 out of 10, but the Fire Chief's compensation status and the Police Department's undifferentiated officer pay require correction.

I. Fire Department Analysis

Current Finding

The job shadowing process found that the Fire Department:

- Appears adequately staffed.
- Uses classifications that generally correspond with Georgia municipal classifications.
- Is led by an hourly Fire Chief.
- Requires the Fire Chief to work substantially more than 2,080 hours annually.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs defines a Fire Chief as the position that plans, directs, organizes, and coordinates the activities of the fire department. That is an executive and departmental-management function rather than merely a senior firefighter assignment.

Comparison with Similar Georgia Cities

Hahira

Hahira provides one of the strongest public comparisons. Its municipal structure separately identifies a Fire Chief, Police Chief, Public Works Director, City Manager, and City Clerk. Its Fire Department provides continuous coverage using seven full-time and six part-time firefighters and officers.

Comparison with Walthourville:

- Both cities recognize the Fire Chief as a distinct department head.
- Both operate municipal fire services within a relatively small-city structure.
- Hahira uses a mix of full-time and part-time personnel to provide 24-hour service.
- Hahira's public structure does not suggest that the Fire Chief is merely classified as another line firefighter.
- Hahira has also used municipal salary studies to compare department-head compensation with similarly sized jurisdictions, demonstrating that small cities commonly benchmark the Chief separately from firefighters.

Metter

Metter's population is approximately 4,021, making it almost identical to Walthourville in size.

Georgia's municipal wage survey places cities in population groups and separately recognizes:

- Fire Chief
- Assistant Fire Chief
- Fire Captain
- Driver or Engine Operator
- Firefighter

This demonstrates that even in smaller jurisdictions, the Fire Chief is normally evaluated as a separate executive classification rather than paid solely by reference to firefighter hours.

Glennville

Glennville has an official population of approximately 3,834 and an estimated population of approximately 5,104. It is therefore a reasonable comparison, although it is currently somewhat larger than Walthourville.

Its size supports the general conclusion that a small municipality may maintain separate police and fire department heads without creating several layers of executive command below them.

Grantville

Grantville has an estimated population of approximately 3,281, slightly smaller than Walthourville.

Grantville is useful as a structural comparison because municipalities in this population category typically depend on working department heads. A Fire Chief may perform administrative responsibilities while also responding to emergencies, assisting with inspections, conducting training, maintaining equipment, and filling operational shifts.

That overlap is reasonable. The problem arises when operational staffing shortages cause the Fire Chief to routinely work excessive hours in addition to the full executive workload.

Is It Appropriate for the Fire Chief to Be Hourly?

General conclusion

An hourly Fire Chief is not automatically improper. Georgia's DCA survey includes some jurisdictions that report fire leadership compensation on an hourly basis, although the majority of Fire Chief entries are expressed as annual salaries.

The proper classification depends on:

- Actual duties.
- Independent authority.
- Whether the position directs the department.
- Whether the Chief hires, disciplines, evaluates, and assigns employees.
- Whether the Chief prepares the departmental budget.
- Whether the Chief establishes policy and operational procedures.
- Whether the Chief performs primarily executive work or primarily line-level firefighting.
- The applicable Fair Labor Standards Act requirements.

The title alone does not determine exempt or nonexempt status.

FLSA considerations

Public fire-protection employees may be placed on a work-period arrangement under Section 7(k) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. For a 28-day work period, overtime generally becomes due after 212 hours for eligible fire-protection employees. Proportionate thresholds apply to shorter work periods. Public agencies may also provide compensatory time under prescribed conditions.

However, the City should not assume that simply converting the Fire Chief to salary eliminates overtime obligations. The City must evaluate the duties test and the Chief's actual role with qualified employment counsel.

Annual-hours concern

A standard 40-hour schedule produces: 40 hours X 52 weeks = 2,080 hours annually

Fire-service schedules often exceed 2,080 scheduled hours because employees work extended shifts. Therefore, the analysis should distinguish between:

1. Hours built into an authorized fire-service schedule.
2. Hours worked beyond that schedule because of vacancies or insufficient staffing.
3. Administrative work completed outside operational shifts.
4. Emergency callbacks.
5. Unrecorded or uncompensated time.

A Fire Chief consistently working substantially beyond the established schedule presents several concerns:

- Fatigue and safety exposure.
- Increased overtime liability.
- Burnout and turnover risk.
- Inadequate delegation.
- Insufficient command backup.
- Lack of succession planning.

- Possible dependence on one individual for emergency and administrative continuity.

Fire Department Alignment Score

Area evaluated	Score	Assessment
Classification structure	9/10	Fire Chief and Firefighter classifications align with recognized Georgia municipal roles
Apparent staffing level	8/10	Job-shadow findings indicate sufficient staffing, subject to verification through call and shift data
Use of a working Fire Chief	9/10	Common and appropriate for a small municipality
Hourly Fire Chief arrangement	6/10	Permissible in some circumstances, but less consistent with an executive department-head model
Excessive Chief hours	4/10	Indicates workload, scheduling, delegation, or compensation concerns
Overall Fire Department alignment	7.5/10	Organizationally sound, but the Chief's hours and pay status require formal review

II. Police Department Analysis

Current Structure

The Police Department currently includes:

- Police Chief
- Police Major
- Police Corporal
- Police Officers
- No identified dedicated Safety Officer
- One common hiring rate for all police officers, regardless of experience

The DCA municipal classification framework separately recognizes the following police classifications:

- Police Chief
- Assistant Police Chief
- Police Captain
- Police Lieutenant
- Police Sergeant
- Police Corporal
- Investigator or Detective
- Police Officer

The DCA description of a Police Corporal identifies the position as performing law enforcement and routine investigative work, potentially training entry level officers and serving as lead officer on special assignments.

Comparison with Similar Georgia Cities

Hahira

Hahira provides 24-hour municipal police protection and identifies a Police Chief as the department head. The City describes its policing model as community oriented and notes that the department patrols residential and commercial areas, investigates criminal activity, enforces laws, and coordinates with county, state, and federal agencies.

Comparison with Walthourville:

- Both maintain a municipal Police Chief.
- Both must provide broad policing responsibilities with a relatively small workforce.
- Hahira's publicly visible organization does not demonstrate a need for several executive ranks at its size.
- Small city officers must commonly perform overlapping patrol, traffic, investigation, community policing, court, school-safety, and administrative assignments.

This supports a lean command structure with multifunctional officers.

Metter

Metter's population is almost identical to Walthourville's.

For a municipality of this size, a reasonable police hierarchy would ordinarily include:

- Police Chief
- One second in command or operations commander
- One or more first line supervisors, depending on shifts
- Patrol officers
- Specialized duties assigned as collateral responsibilities

This suggests that Walthourville's Chief–Major–Corporal structure may be appropriate only when each level has a materially different scope of authority.

Glennville

Glennville's official population is close to Walthourville's, although its current estimated population is higher.

Glennville provides a useful comparison for evaluating whether Walthourville has sufficient:

- Shift coverage.
- First-line supervision.
- Investigative capacity.
- Traffic enforcement.
- Community-policing coverage.
- Command backup.

Population alone, however, cannot determine police staffing. Service area calls for service, crime levels, traffic, proximity to military installations, mutual-aid responsibilities, special events, and coverage expectations are equally important.

Grantville

Grantville is somewhat smaller than Walthourville.

In a city of this size, it is common for:

- The Chief to perform administrative and operational duties.
- A second in command to oversee patrol, investigations, evidence, training, or scheduling.
- Corporals or sergeants to function as shift leaders.
- Patrol officers to carry secondary assignments such as safety, training, evidence, community relations, fleet, or school-zone enforcement.

This supports assigning safety functions to a qualified officer rather than immediately creating another high-level command classification.

III. Assessment of the Police Major Position

Alignment with comparable cities:

A Police Major can be justified in Walthourville when the position functions as the genuine second in command and performs responsibilities such as:

- Acting as Police Chief in the Chief's absence.

- Supervising patrol and investigations.
- Reviewing use-of-force incidents.
- Managing internal investigations.
- Overseeing scheduling.
- Coordinating training.
- Administering grants.
- Managing evidence and records compliance.
- Developing policy.
- Supervising the Corporal and officers.
- Coordinating emergency management and mutual aid.

When those responsibilities are present, the title may align with an Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, Captain, or Major classification.

The title becomes difficult to defend when the Major:

- Primarily performs routine patrol.
- Has limited staff supervision.
- Does not independently direct a division or major function.
- Has duties like the Corporal.
- Does not act for the Chief.
- Has little authority over policy, discipline, scheduling, or operations.

Recommended title review

For a small department, one of these titles may provide clearer market alignment:

- **Police Major/Assistant Chief**
- **Deputy Police Chief**
- **Police Captain**
- **Police Operations Commander**

The position should not be retained at a senior command grade solely because of title or tenure. Its classification should be based on actual authority, span of control, and organizational impact.

IV. Assessment of the Police Corporal Position

Alignment with comparable cities:

A Police Corporal is appropriate for a municipality of Walthourville's size when the employee:

- Leads an assigned shift.
- Provides field guidance.
- Reviews reports.

- Assists with scheduling.
- Trains or mentors less-experienced officers.
- Serves as the ranking officer in the absence of higher command.
- Responds to major incidents.
- Performs regular patrol duties.

This is consistent with DCA's description of the Corporal as a lead officer who may train entry-level officers and serve on special assignments.

One Corporal may be insufficient, however, when the department provides around the clock coverage across multiple shifts. The City should determine whether each shift has a designated supervisor or officer in charge.

V. Proposed Safety Officer

Does the department need another employee?

Possibly, but the need should be supported by workload and coverage data rather than population alone.

The term **Safety Officer** should also be defined. It could describe several different functions:

Option 1: Police Officer/Safety and Training Coordinator

A sworn officer who performs regular patrol but has additional responsibility for:

- Employee safety training.
- Defensive tactics and firearms coordination.
- Vehicle and pursuit safety.
- Body worn camera compliance.
- Workplace violence preparedness.
- Emergency action planning.
- Accident review.
- Safety inspections.
- Personal protective equipment.
- OSHA related coordination.
- Evidence of annual training.
- School zone and traffic safety initiatives.

This is the most practical model for Walthourville.

Option 2: Citywide Safety and Risk Coordinator

A civilian or administrative position serving all departments and coordinating:

- Workers' compensation.
- Accident reporting.
- Safety committees.
- Facility inspections.
- Driver training.
- Loss control recommendations.
- Emergency preparedness.
- Insurance and risk management requirements.

This position would not normally be placed solely inside the Police Department unless the duties are primarily law-enforcement related.

Option 3: Additional Patrol Officer with Safety Assignment

This may be the best immediate solution where the City needs more coverage but cannot justify a full-time specialized safety position.

The employee would spend most of the workweek on patrol and receive a formal collateral assignment for departmental or citywide safety.

Recommended approach

For Walthourville, I recommend creating a:

Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator

The employee should:

- Be a certified and experienced officer.
- Perform regular patrol and coverage duties.
- Coordinate departmental training.
- Track certifications.
- Assist with policy compliance.
- Conduct safety inspections and accident reviews.
- Coordinate risk-management training with GMA or the City's insurer.
- Serve as backup investigator or evidence officer.
- Report administratively to the Police Major or Police Chief.

This provides operational value without creating another command heavy position.

VI. Police Officer Pay Compression

Current finding

All police officers are hired at the same rate regardless of:

- Years of certified law-enforcement experience.
- Prior municipal service.
- Specialized assignments.
- Instructor credentials.
- Investigative experience.
- Education.
- Advanced certifications.
- Field-training responsibilities.

Alignment with comparable practice:

A common minimum hiring rate is appropriate for applicants who enter with similar qualifications. It is less appropriate to pay a newly certified recruit and an experienced lateral officer the same amount.

This practice creates several problems:

- It discourages experienced officers from applying.
- It provides no financial recognition for directly relevant experience.
- It may force the City to rely primarily on inexperienced applicants.
- It creates compression between new and experienced incumbents.
- It weakens the value of career progression.
- It encourages experienced officers to leave for jurisdictions offering lateral-entry credit.
- It can result in informal or inconsistent salary negotiations.

The broader law enforcement market continues to experience recruitment and retention challenges, making structured recognition of experience increasingly important.

Recommended officer classifications

Classification	Typical profile	Proposed purpose
Police Officer Recruit	Not yet Georgia POST certified	Academy and field-training stage
Police Officer I	Newly certified or limited relevant experience	Entry-level independent patrol
Police Officer II	Experienced certified officer	Advanced patrol, mentoring, specialized assignments
Police Corporal	Lead officer or first-line supervisor	Shift leadership and field supervision

Recommended placement factors

The City should award credit for:

- Completed Georgia POST certification.
- Directly relevant full-time sworn service.
- Prior municipal or county law-enforcement service.
- Field Training Officer certification.
- Instructor certification.
- Investigations experience.
- Advanced traffic or crash-investigation training.
- Crisis intervention certification.
- School-resource experience.
- Degree attainment where job-related.
- Bilingual ability where operationally useful.

Illustrative placement policy

Experience level	Suggested placement
Recruit or uncertified	Recruit rate
Certified with fewer than 2 years	Police Officer I minimum to lower quartile
2–5 years of relevant experience	Police Officer I upper range or Police Officer II lower range
More than 5 years with strong performance	Police Officer II range
Lead-worker or shift-supervision duties	Corporal range
Specialized safety/training assignment	Police Officer II plus assignment incentive, or higher placement within range

The City should establish a maximum amount of prior service credit to protect internal equity. For example, it may recognize up to five or seven years of directly relevant service for hiring placement.

VII. Comparative Alignment Score

Walthourville feature	Alignment score	Comparative assessment
Fire Chief classification	9/10	Clearly aligns with Georgia municipal classification practice
Firefighter classification structure	9/10	Standard and appropriate
Working Fire Chief model	9/10	Common in small municipalities
Hourly Fire Chief status	6/10	Not prohibited or unique, but less consistent with an executive department-head role
Fire Chief working excessive hours	4/10	Indicates potential staffing, scheduling, delegation, or compliance concern
Police Chief position	10/10	Appropriate and standard
Police Major/second-in-command	7/10	Defensible if authority and duties are materially different from the Chief and Corporal
Police Corporal	9/10	Appropriate as a first-line or lead-officer classification
Proposed additional Safety Officer	8/10	Reasonable when combined with patrol and training responsibilities
Same hiring rate for every officer	3/10	Does not adequately recognize lateral experience or support competitive recruitment
Overall public-safety alignment	7.5/10	Structurally sound, but compensation and role-definition changes are needed

VIII. Recommended Realignment

Fire Department

Fire Chief

Retain the classification but conduct a formal FLSA and workload review.

Recommended actions:

1. Document all administrative, operational, callback, and shift hours for at least three representative months.
2. Establish an official work period and overtime policy.
3. Determine whether the Chief meets an applicable executive exemption.
4. Evaluate whether the Chief should remain nonexempt hourly or become properly classified as salaried exempt.
5. Set expectations for operational shift participation.
6. Assign routine training, equipment, or station duties to subordinate personnel where appropriate.
7. Establish an acting-chief or command-backup designation.
8. Require authorization and monitoring of excessive overtime.

Firefighters

Retain the current classification structure unless job-shadow findings identified distinct differences in certification or responsibility.

The City may later consider:

- Firefighter Recruit
- Firefighter I
- Firefighter II
- Driver/Engineer
- Lieutenant or Captain

Those levels should be established only when duties and qualifications differ meaningfully.

Police Department

Police Chief

Retain as department head with responsibility for:

- Policy.
- Budget.
- Discipline.
- Strategic planning.
- Community relations.
- Intergovernmental coordination.
- Departmental accountability.

Police Major/Assistant Chief

Retain only if the position has genuine second-in-command authority. Clarify responsibilities for:

- Operations.
- Investigations.
- Training.
- Internal affairs.
- Scheduling.
- Policy.
- Acting-chief responsibilities.

Police Corporal

Retain as the first-line or lead-officer classification.

Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator

Add one position, subject to budget and workload validation.

Primary duties should include:

- Regular patrol.
- Shift coverage.
- Safety and training coordination.
- Certification tracking.
- Accident review.
- Policy and equipment inspections.
- Field-training support.
- Emergency-preparedness coordination.

Police Officer I and II

Create differentiated classifications and salary placement standards so that experienced officers are not automatically hired at the same rate as newly certified officers.

IX. Data the City Should Review Before Final Adoption

Population comparison alone is not sufficient to determine public-safety staffing. Mayor and Council should receive at least the following:

- Annual fire calls by type.
- Concurrent fire-call frequency.
- Fire-station staffing by shift.
- Minimum staffing requirements.
- Chief overtime and callback hours.
- Use of part-time or volunteer firefighters.
- Fire inspection and training workload.
- Police calls for service.
- Crime and traffic statistics.
- Average response times.
- Officer-initiated activity.
- Number of officers assigned per shift.
- Overtime and vacancy rates.
- Leave coverage.
- Mutual-aid reliance.
- Investigative caseload.
- Training and court hours.
- City limits and patrol mileage.
- Special-event and school-zone demands.

This information will establish whether the apparent staffing adequacy identified through job shadowing is sustained throughout the full year.

Overall Conclusion

The Fire Department appears appropriately organized for a municipality of Walthourville's size. The main issue is not classification overlap; it is whether the Fire Chief's hourly status and excessive hours accurately and lawfully reflect an executive department-head position. The City should not convert the Chief to salary merely to avoid overtime. It should first conduct a documented duties and FLSA analysis.

The Police Department's Chief, Major, Corporal, and Officer structure is generally defensible, although it is relatively command-heavy for a city of approximately 3,945 residents. The Police Major must have clearly differentiated command duties to justify the classification. Rather than adding another senior rank, the stronger organizational response would be to add a **Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator** who remains available for patrol.

Finally, the City should discontinue the practice of paying every officer the same hiring rate regardless of directly relevant experience. A Police Officer I and II progression, lateral-entry placement policy, and clearly defined Corporal differential would provide a more equitable, competitive, and sustainable public-safety compensation structure.

Recommended Public Safety Grade and Salary Structure

The following placement integrates the Fire and Police positions into the same compensation framework proposed for Walthourville's administrative staff. The structure recognizes command responsibility, POST or fire service certification, supervisory authority, emergency response exposure, and the need for meaningful progression between ranks.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs maintains the primary statewide municipal wage survey and currently provides a 2024 database while developing the 2025 database. DCA also treats Fire Chief, Police Chief, Police Corporal, Police Officer, and other public-safety ranks as distinct classifications based on their actual duties.

Proposed Placement Summary

Position	Proposed grade	Recommended starting structure	Proposed annual range
Firefighter Recruit	Grade 3	\$35,000	\$34,000–\$44,000
Firefighter I	Grade 4	\$39,000	\$37,000–\$49,000
Firefighter II/Driver-Operator	Grade 5	\$44,000	\$41,000–\$55,000
Fire Chief	Grade 8	\$65,000	\$60,000–\$82,000
Police Officer Recruit	Grade 4	\$38,000	\$36,000–\$48,000
Police Officer I	Grade 5	\$44,000	\$41,000–\$55,000
Police Officer II	Grade 6	\$49,000	\$46,000–\$61,000
Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator	Grade 6	\$52,000	\$46,000–\$63,000
Police Corporal	Grade 7	\$55,000	\$51,000–\$68,000
Police Major/Assistant Chief	Grade 8	\$63,000	\$58,000–\$78,000
Police Chief	Grade 9	\$72,000	\$66,000–\$90,000

The “recommended starting structure” represents the suggested hiring or initial placement rate for a fully qualified employee who meets the normal requirements of the position. It is not intended to replace the full minimum-to-maximum salary range.

Recommended Grade Schedule

To maintain one consistent citywide compensation plan, the public-safety positions could be incorporated into the following grade structure:

Grade	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
Grade 3	\$34,000	\$39,000	\$44,000
Grade 4	\$36,000	\$42,500	\$49,000
Grade 5	\$41,000	\$48,000	\$55,000
Grade 6	\$46,000	\$53,500	\$61,000
Grade 7	\$51,000	\$59,500	\$68,000
Grade 8	\$58,000	\$68,000	\$78,000
Grade 9	\$66,000	\$78,000	\$90,000

A limited technical or assignment maximum may be used for specially designated positions, such as the Safety and Training Coordinator, without creating an entirely separate grade.

Fire Department Placement

Firefighter Recruit

Grade 3

Starting rate: \$35,000

Proposed range: \$34,000–\$44,000

This classification should apply only to an employee who has not completed all required firefighter certifications or who is completing an approved introductory training period.

The employee should automatically move to Firefighter I after:

- Completing required firefighter certification

- Completing the departmental probationary period
- Demonstrating satisfactory performance
- Meeting required medical and physical standards

The recruit classification prevents the City from paying an uncertified trainee the same rate as a fully qualified firefighter.

Firefighter I

Grade 4

Starting rate: \$39,000

Proposed range: \$37,000–\$49,000

Firefighter I should be the standard classification for a certified firefighter who performs:

- Fire suppression
- Emergency response
- Rescue support
- Equipment maintenance
- Station duties
- Required training
- Fire-prevention and public-education assignments

The recommended starting rate equals approximately \$18.75 per hour when calculated over a traditional 2,080-hour year. Fire service employees may work a different authorized schedule, so payroll administration should use the applicable FLSA work period rather than relying solely on the 2,080-hour calculation.

A firefighter should normally remain in the lower half of the range during the initial years of service and progress based on experience, performance, credentials, and increased responsibilities.

Firefighter II/Driver-Operator

Grade 5

Starting rate: \$44,000

Proposed range: \$41,000–\$55,000

This classification should be used only when the employee performs duties beyond those of Firefighter I, such as:

- Operating fire apparatus
- Performing pump operations
- Serving as an experienced crew member
- Training or mentoring new firefighters
- Maintaining specialized equipment
- Possessing advanced emergency medical or fire-service credentials
- Acting as a crew leader when designated

Creating Firefighter I and II classifications is optional. Because the job shadow findings indicated that the Fire Department is adequately aligned, Walthourville should create the higher classification only when it can document a meaningful difference in responsibility.

Fire Chief

Grade 8

Recommended starting salary: \$65,000

Proposed range: \$60,000–\$82,000

Although the standard Grade 8 maximum is proposed at \$78,000, a Fire Chief maximum of \$82,000 is reasonable because of the position's emergency availability, technical leadership, regulatory responsibility, and potential involvement in operational shifts.

The position should be responsible for:

- Department administration
- Emergency-response readiness
- Personnel supervision
- Training compliance
- Fire inspections and prevention
- Budget preparation
- Apparatus and equipment management
- Mutual-aid coordination
- Policy development
- Emergency planning
- Reporting to City leadership

Recommended placement

Qualification level	Recommended placement
Newly appointed Chief with limited command experience	\$60,000–\$64,000
Fully qualified and experienced Chief	\$65,000–\$72,000
Highly experienced Chief with advanced responsibilities	\$73,000–\$82,000

The Chief should not automatically be placed at the top of the range because of excessive hours. Base salary should reflect the value of the classification; overtime or compensatory time should be handled separately under the correct FLSA classification.

Hourly versus salary recommendation

The City should complete a formal duties and FLSA analysis before changing the Fire Chief from hourly to salaried status. A salary designation alone does not eliminate overtime eligibility. Public fire employees may qualify for the special FLSA Section 7(k) work-period rules, but the City must establish and administer the applicable work period correctly.

If the Fire Chief remains hourly, the range may be expressed approximately as:

Annual salary Equivalent hourly rate at 2,080 hours

\$60,000	\$28.85
\$65,000	\$31.25
\$72,000	\$34.62
\$82,000	\$39.42

Those hourly equivalents are for compensation plan comparison only. They should not be used to determine fire service overtime thresholds without an FLSA review.

Police Department Placement

Police Officer Recruit

Grade 4

Starting rate: \$38,000

Proposed range: \$36,000–\$48,000

This classification should be used for an employee who has not yet obtained Georgia POST certification.

The City may pay academy expenses and move the employee to Police Officer I after:

- Successful completion of the academy
- Receipt of POST certification
- Completion of field training
- Satisfactory performance
- Continued eligibility to serve as a sworn officer

The recruit rate should generally be temporary and should not be used for an already certified lateral officer.

Police Officer I

Grade 5

Starting rate: \$44,000

Proposed range: \$41,000–\$55,000

Police Officer I should be the standard classification for:

- A newly certified officer
- An officer with limited full-time experience
- An employee completing the initial municipal field-training and development period

The position performs:

- Patrol
- Traffic enforcement
- Report preparation
- Preliminary investigations
- Arrests
- Court testimony
- Community policing
- Emergency response

The proposed starting salary is below the reported 2026 statewide average for Georgia police-officer postings, which was approximately \$52,477, but it is calibrated for a small municipality with a population under 4,000. The full range permits Walthourville to compete for more experienced candidates.

Recommended placement

Candidate profile	Starting placement
Newly POST-certified, limited experience	\$41,000–\$44,000
POST-certified with 1–2 years	\$44,000–\$47,000
Experienced lateral candidate not yet meeting Officer II standards	\$47,000–\$50,000

Police Officer II

Grade 6

Starting rate: \$49,000

Proposed range: \$46,000–\$61,000

Police Officer II should recognize experienced officers who demonstrate advanced proficiency and can work with limited supervision.

Recommended qualifications could include:

- Three or more years of directly relevant sworn experience
- Satisfactory performance
- Completion of advanced training
- Ability to handle complex incidents
- Mentoring of junior officers
- Specialized assignments
- Strong report-writing and investigative ability

The City should avoid making advancement entirely automatic based on years of service. Progression should require demonstrated competency and satisfactory performance.

Recommended placement

Candidate profile	Starting placement
Newly promoted Officer II	\$46,000–\$49,000
Experienced lateral officer with 3–5 years	\$49,000–\$54,000
Highly experienced officer with specialized credentials	\$55,000–\$61,000

Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator

Grade 6

Recommended starting rate: \$52,000

Proposed range: \$46,000–\$63,000

The position should remain in Grade 6 because it is primarily a senior police-officer position rather than a command rank. However, the employee should receive one of the following:

- Higher placement within Grade 6
- A certification or assignment incentive
- A recurring responsibility stipend
- A slightly extended Grade 6 maximum

The recommended starting rate of \$52,000 recognizes that the person should be an experienced officer capable of independently administering the safety and training assignment.

Recommended additional duties include:

- Training coordination
- Certification tracking
- Field training support
- Accident review
- Equipment inspection
- Vehicle and pursuit safety coordination
- Policy compliance checks
- Workplace safety training
- Risk management liaison duties
- Emergency preparedness support

Alternative stipend method

Instead of extending the salary range to \$63,000, the City could keep the employee within the standard Grade 6 range of \$46,000–\$61,000 and provide an annual assignment stipend of:

\$2,000–\$3,000

The stipend should apply only while the employee performs the additional designated duties.

Police Corporal

Grade 7

Recommended starting rate: \$55,000

Proposed range: \$51,000–\$68,000

The Corporal should be classified as a first-line supervisor or formal lead officer rather than simply an experienced Police Officer.

The DCA classification recognizes that a Police Corporal may train entry-level officers and serve as lead officer on special assignments.

Recommended duties include:

- Shift leadership
- Field supervision
- Report review
- Incident command
- Coaching and training
- Scheduling support
- Policy enforcement
- Acting-supervisor responsibility
- Initial review of complaints and use-of-force incidents

Recommended placement

Qualification level	Recommended placement
Newly promoted Corporal	\$51,000–\$55,000
Fully functioning shift leader	\$56,000–\$61,000
Experienced Corporal with significant supervisory duties	\$62,000–\$68,000

The proposed range creates an appropriate differential above Police Officer II. As a general principle, promotion to Corporal should result in at least a 5% pay increase or placement at the Grade 7 minimum, whichever is greater.

Police Major/Assistant Chief

Grade 8

Recommended starting rate: \$63,000

Proposed range: \$58,000–\$78,000

This position should be classified at Grade 8 only when it serves as a genuine second in command.

Required duties should include:

- Acting as Police Chief
- Supervising the Corporal and officers
- Managing operations or investigations
- Reviewing reports and major incidents
- Coordinating schedules
- Overseeing training
- Assisting with discipline and performance management
- Conducting internal investigations
- Managing evidence, grants, or accreditation functions
- Developing policies and procedures

A 2026 commercial salary estimate placed the typical Georgia Police Major range at approximately \$41,000–\$62,900, with an average near \$52,477. Because that source includes varied employers and job scopes, it should be treated as secondary support rather than the principal benchmark. Walthourville’s proposed range is higher because the role is expected to function as Assistant Chief and true second-in-command.

Recommended placement

Qualification level	Recommended placement
Newly promoted second-in-command	\$58,000–\$63,000
Experienced command officer	\$64,000–\$70,000
Highly experienced officer with broad administrative authority	\$71,000–\$78,000

If the employee primarily performs patrol and has limited command authority, the position should instead be classified as Police Captain or Lieutenant in Grade 7, with a range closer to \$53,000–\$70,000.

Police Chief

Grade 9

Recommended starting salary: \$72,000

Proposed range: \$66,000–\$90,000

The Police Chief should be the highest graded public-safety position because the Chief carries:

- Department-wide command authority
- Policy responsibility
- Budget responsibility

- Hiring and disciplinary authority
- Legal and regulatory accountability
- Community and intergovernmental relations
- Use-of-force oversight
- Emergency-management responsibilities
- Direct accountability to elected or appointed City leadership

Recommended placement

Qualification level	Recommended placement
Newly appointed Chief with appropriate credentials	\$66,000–\$72,000
Experienced municipal Police Chief	\$73,000–\$81,000
Highly experienced Chief with expanded responsibilities	\$82,000–\$90,000

This range is designed for a small municipality and should not be compared directly with larger metropolitan police departments. Current statewide police-officer and police-sergeant figures show that experienced line and supervisory officers may already command compensation around or above \$50,000–\$60,000, reinforcing the need for adequate separation between officer, Corporal, Major, and Chief pay.

Recommended Starting Structure for Police Experience

The City should replace its single officer hiring rate with a structured lateral-entry policy.

Prior directly relevant sworn experience	Recommended starting placement
Uncertified recruit	Police Officer Recruit starting rate
POST-certified with less than 1 year	Police Officer I minimum to starting rate
1–2 years	Police Officer I starting rate to 90% of midpoint
3–5 years	Police Officer II minimum through midpoint
6 or more years	Police Officer II midpoint to approximately 110% of midpoint
Formal shift-lead or supervisory experience	Evaluate for Corporal eligibility; do not automatically appoint by experience alone

Recommended experience-credit formula

A practical policy would allow:

- **1% above the applicable starting rate for each full year of directly related sworn experience**
- Maximum initial experience credit of 7%
- Additional consideration for hard-to-recruit certifications or specialties
- No initial placement above midpoint without written approval

Example

A Police Officer II starting rate is proposed at \$49,000.

An applicant with five years of directly relevant service could receive: $\$49,000 \times 1.05 = \$51,450$

The City could therefore offer approximately **\$51,450**, subject to internal equity and budget availability.

Recommended Promotional Increase Policy

When an existing employee is promoted:

- Move the employee to the new grade minimum; or
- Provide a **5% increase**, whichever is greater.

For significant command promotions, the City may authorize up to 7.5% when needed to maintain a reasonable pay differential.

Examples

Promotion	Minimum recommended increase
Officer I to Officer II	5% or Grade 6 minimum
Officer II to Corporal	5% or Grade 7 minimum
Corporal to Major/Assistant Chief	7.5% or Grade 8 minimum
Major to Police Chief	7.5% or Grade 9 minimum
Firefighter I to Firefighter II	5% or Grade 5 minimum
Firefighter to Fire Chief	Placement based on Chief qualifications and Grade 8 minimum

Internal Pay Relationships

The recommended structure creates the following approximate starting-rate differentials:

Relationship	Starting-rate difference
Firefighter Recruit to Firefighter I	11.4%
Firefighter I to Firefighter II	12.8%
Firefighter II to Fire Chief	47.7%
Police Recruit to Officer I	15.8%
Officer I to Officer II	11.4%
Officer II to Corporal	12.2%
Corporal to Major	14.5%
Major to Police Chief	14.3%

These differences are sufficient to recognize advancement without producing excessive distance between successive ranks.

Final Recommended Public-Safety Crosswalk

Current or proposed title	Final classification	Grade	Recommended starting structure	Proposed range
Firefighter trainee, when applicable	Firefighter Recruit	3	\$35,000	\$34,000–\$44,000
Firefighter	Firefighter I	4	\$39,000	\$37,000–\$49,000
Experienced apparatus operator	Firefighter II/Driver-Operator	5	\$44,000	\$41,000–\$55,000
Fire Chief	Fire Chief	8	\$65,000	\$60,000–\$82,000

Current or proposed title	Final classification	Grade	Recommended starting structure	Proposed range
Uncertified police applicant	Police Officer Recruit	4	\$38,000	\$36,000–\$48,000
Newly certified officer	Police Officer I	5	\$44,000	\$41,000–\$55,000
Experienced officer	Police Officer II	6	\$49,000	\$46,000–\$61,000
New safety position	Police Officer II/Safety and Training Coordinator	6	\$52,000	\$46,000–\$63,000
Police Corporal	Police Corporal	7	\$55,000	\$51,000–\$68,000
Police Major	Police Major/Assistant Chief	8	\$63,000	\$58,000–\$78,000
Police Chief	Police Chief	9	\$72,000	\$66,000–\$90,000

Recommendation

For the final compensation plan, we recommend that Walthourville:

1. Place the Fire Chief and Police Major in Grade 8, but give the Fire Chief a slightly higher maximum due to department head responsibility and emergency availability.
2. Place the Police Chief alone in Grade 9.
3. Establish Police Officer I and II classifications to recognize experience and reduce recruitment barriers.
4. Place the proposed Safety and Training Coordinator within Police Officer II rather than creating another command rank.
5. Maintain the Corporal as a true Grade 7 supervisory classification.
6. Establish a lateral-entry policy so certified and experienced officers are not automatically hired at the same rate as entry-level officers.
7. Review the Fire Chief's FLSA status and working hours separately from the compensation-plan placement.
8. Compare each incumbent's existing pay with the new grade minimum before calculating the implementation cost.

These proposed ranges provide a defensible starting framework. Final adoption should be based on the City's current incumbent salaries, overtime history, total benefits value, budget capacity, and the complete 2024 DCA municipal wage data.

Current Benefits Analysis

Introductory Statement

The Current Benefits Analysis evaluates the City's existing employee benefits structure, including health insurance, retirement provisions, and other ancillary benefits, in comparison to standard practices among similarly sized municipalities in Georgia. The purpose of this analysis is to assess both the competitiveness and financial sustainability of the City's total compensation package.

This section examines the City's current benefits offerings in relation to market norms, identifying areas of strength as well as potential opportunities for cost optimization and program enhancement. Attention is given to employer cost exposure, employee value perception, and alignment with evolving workforce expectations.

The findings outlined in this section will inform strategic recommendations regarding benefit design, including potential adjustments to existing programs and consideration of alternative models to ensure long-term fiscal responsibility while maintaining the City's ability to attract and retain qualified personnel.

Walthourville's Current Benefits Analysis

Walthourville currently appears to carry two distinct insurance tracks:

1. Employee health insurance through the Georgia Municipal Association / GMEBS platform, and the city has been publicly reported as paying 100% of employee health premiums.
2. Municipal property/liability coverage through GIRMA, with the city's 2024–2025 renewal packet showing coverage for general liability, law enforcement liability, employee benefits liability, public officials/errors and omissions, automobile liability, crime/fidelity, and cyber liability. The agenda item states the city's property and liability insurance is administered through GIRMA, a subsidiary of GMA, and shows a 2024–2025 premium of \$127,847.

The city's proposed FY2025 budget also shows line items for group insurance, workers' compensation, and liability insurance, which confirms that employee benefits and risk coverage are being budgeted separately rather than as one bundled product.

Walthourville's Current Plan

From the strongest public evidence available, the current package looks like this:

- Health insurance: through the GMA/GMEBS ecosystem, with public reporting that Walthourville pays 100% of employee premiums.
- Property/liability program: GIRMA coverage including general liability, law-enforcement liability, employee benefits liability, employment-practices exposure, E&O/public officials, auto, crime/fidelity, and cyber.
- Workers' compensation: budgeted as a separate expense line in both general administration and water administration.

I did not find a public Walthourville handbook or benefits booklet that lays out dental, vision, life, disability, dependent contributions, or retirement in a complete employee-facing summary. So, on those components, the evidence is incomplete.

Comparable small city Georgia benefits

Publicly available benefit documents for exact Walthourville size peers are limited, so the most usable benchmark set is small Georgia municipalities with published benefit documents.

City of Harlem

Harlem's published employee benefits sheet is comparatively rich. It states the city offers life, health, dental, and vision, pays 100% of employee coverage, pays 70% of dependent coverage, provides a \$25,000 term life policy, provides short-term disability and AD&D at no cost, offers supplemental coverage through American Fidelity, uses a cafeteria plan for pre-tax deductions, and offers a deferred compensation retirement plan with an automatic 3% contribution and up to an additional 3% match.

City of Guyton

Guyton's handbook shows a more conventional small-city model: after 30 days, full-time employees may choose to participate in the city's health insurance, employees receive plan descriptions and employee-cost information, and Guyton also references a city pension plan, continuation of group health during FMLA on the same terms, and workers' compensation coverage. The handbook does not disclose the city's premium share in the snippet we have, so this is a documented benefits framework but not a documented employer contribution percentage.

City of Hahira

Hahira has an ordinance subscribing to a group health employee benefits plan through the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS) and specifically references coverage through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia under a 90/80 300 PPO plan. That confirms another Georgia municipality using a formal

municipal group-health structure through GMEBS rather than an HRA-only model.

What that benchmark suggests

The market pattern among small Georgia municipalities is still predominantly:

- traditional group health coverage, often through GMA/GMEBS or another municipal group platform, and
- a broader bundle that may include life, dental, vision, disability, retirement, and pre-tax cafeteria features.

That means Walthourville's current design is not unusual in structure. What is more aggressive is the reported employer-paid 100% employee-premium model, because that is generous for a fiscally stressed small city. Harlem also pays 100% of employee-only coverage, but Harlem additionally pays only 70% of dependent coverage, which is a more moderated cost-sharing design than a potential across-the-board full subsidy.

Could ICHRA work for Walthourville?

Potentially yes, but only in the right operating model.

Federal agencies expressly allow employers to offer an Individual Coverage HRA (ICHRA). IRS guidance states that final rules allow HRAs to be integrated with individual health insurance coverage or Medicare if conditions are met. CMS explains that reimbursements may include premiums and cost sharing for individual coverage, and Georgia Access says ICHRA contributions are tax-exempt with no set contribution limit.

For Walthourville, the strategic case for ICHRA is straightforward:

- it creates budget predictability because the city sets a fixed employer contribution;
- it can reduce the city's exposure to volatile group-premium increases;

- it may work well if the city has a small workforce with diverse household needs; and
- it avoids the city carrying the full burden of a richer traditional plan if affordability has become a fiscal stress point.

The strategic case against ICHRA for Walthourville is equally real:

- employees must buy and maintain individual coverage, which shifts shopping, network comparison, and plan literacy burdens to employees;
- it may be less attractive for recruitment and retention than a strong municipal group plan;
- if the city's contribution is too low, employees may view it as a benefit reduction, not modernization;
- administration is still compliance-heavy because notice, class design, substantiation, and affordability analysis matter.

Practical assessment

For Walthourville, ICHRA could work best as a cost-control alternative if the council's objective is to stop paying 100% of traditional group premiums while still offering a lawful health benefit. It is less compelling if the city's objective is to remain highly competitive against nearby employers using richer group plans.

Is ICHRA legal for a municipality?

Yes, generally. We did not find anything in Georgia law that bars a municipality from using an ICHRA. In fact, Georgia law expressly authorizes municipal governing authorities to provide insurance, retirement, pension, hospitalization, and workers' compensation benefits for employees and dependents.

On the federal side, IRS guidance confirms ICHRAs are lawful if the regulatory conditions are satisfied. CMS and DOL materials show the key rules:

- employees receiving reimbursements must be enrolled in individual health insurance coverage or Medicare;
- the employer generally cannot offer a traditional group health plan and an ICHRA to the same class of employees;
- the ICHRA must generally be offered on the same terms within a class, with limited permitted variation such as age and dependents;

- employees generally must receive a written notice at least 90 days before the plan year;
- if the employer is an applicable large employer, affordability rules matter for ACA employer-mandate purposes. CMS publishes affordability tools for ICHRA, and IRS explains ALE status turns on the employer's full-time equivalent count.

So, the answer is not just "yes, legal." The more precise answer is:

That a Georgia municipality can legally offer an ICHRA, but it must be designed carefully to comply with federal class, notice, substantiation, and affordability rules.

Best-fit recommendation for Walthourville

From a municipal strategy standpoint, we would frame the options this way:

Option 1: Keep the current GMA/GMEBS group model, but add employee cost-sharing

This is the lowest-disruption model. It preserves a traditional group plan while reducing the city's cost load. Based on the public discussion, council has already considered moving from 100% city-paid premiums to a 75/25 or 50/50 split.

Option 2: Move to a leaner group plan plus voluntary add-on

This keeps a recognizable employer-sponsored structure and may be more politically acceptable than eliminating the group plan entirely. Harlem's design shows how a small city can layer group health with ancillary benefits and dependent cost-sharing.

Option 3: Transition to ICHRA

This is viable if the city's priority is **cost certainty** and if employees can realistically access affordable individual-market coverage. It is legally workable, but it would need:

- legal review of the class structure,
- affordability modeling,
- formal plan documents and notice,
- employee education,
- and likely broker/administrator support.

Our Evaluation

For Walthourville specifically, we would rate ICHRA as **legally viable but operationally medium risk**.

- **Legal viability:** high
- **Budget-control value:** high
- **Employee acceptance risk:** moderate to high
- **Recruitment/retention risk:** moderate
- **Administrative complexity:** moderate

In plain terms: it can work, but it should not be adopted as a quick cost-cutting move without plan design, legal review, and employee-transition planning.

Walthourville's Retirement

While a formal retirement plan document for Walthourville was not available, the City's participation in GMA-related insurance programs and the standard practices of similarly sized Georgia municipalities strongly indicate that employees are covered under the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS), a defined benefit pension plan. Comparable cities of similar size consistently utilize this structure, often supplemented by optional defined contribution plans such as 457(b) deferred compensation. This positions Walthourville within the standard retirement framework used across Georgia municipalities.

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